

-21-

WE CLAIM:

1. A method of transacting business including:
connecting a plurality of electronic devices across a network to a business transaction centre, each electronic device having an electronic identity and a predetermined data transmission protocol for transmitting data and/or receiving data and a capability of performing part of a business transaction;
characterising each electronic device connected to the business transaction centre according to its electronic identity and its data transmission protocol;
creating a database of information relating to a plurality of trading partners having one or more of the plurality of interconnected electronic devices;
generating an electronic business call document by way of one of the plurality of interconnected electronic devices ("the calling device"), the call document having a predetermined call document format;
translating the call document to an intermediate format;
identifying another one of the plurality on interconnected electronic devices ("the answering device") to which the call document is to be sent by reference to the information in the database;
translating the call document from the intermediate format to a predetermined answering document format; and
sending the translated call document to said answering device.
2. A method according to Claim 1, including sending the call document to a business transaction centre comprising one or more computers.

-22-

3. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the database of information includes information relating to identity of the trading partners, the format in which documents are to be sent and received, data transmission protocols for the trading partners electronic devices, authentication data, and encryption
5 data.

4. A method of transacting business including:
generating an electronic business call document by way of one of a plurality of interconnected electronic devices in a
10 network ("the calling device"), the call document having a predetermined call document format;
translating the call document to an intermediate format;
identifying another electronic device ("the answering device") to which the call document is to be sent;
15 translating the call document from the intermediate format to a predetermined answering document format; and
sending the translated call document to said answering device.

20 5. A method according to Claim 4, including sending the call document to a business transaction centre comprising one or more computers.

6. A method of transacting business including:
25 creating a database of information relating to a plurality of trading partners having electronic devices connected to each other in a network;
generating an electronic business call document for one trading partner via its electronic device ("the calling device"),
30 the call document having a predetermined call document format;
translating the call document to an intermediate format;

-23-

identifying another trading partner by which the call document is to be received via its electronic device ("the answering device") by reference to information in the call document;

translating the call document from the intermediate format
5 to a predetermined answering document format by reference to the information in the database relating to the other trading partner; and

sending the translated call document to the answering device.

10

7. A method according to Claim 6, including sending the call document to a business transaction centre comprising one or more computers.

15 8. A method according to Claim 6, wherein the database of information includes information relating to identity of the trading partners, the format in which documents are to be sent and received, data transmission protocols for the trading partners electronic devices, authentication data, and encryption
20 data.

9. A system for transacting business, including:

a business transaction centre having means for managing a business transaction among a plurality of trading partners and
25 a plurality of electronic devices in communication with said business transaction centre for data transmission between said centre and each of the trading partners, said business transaction centre having a database of information relating to the identity and characteristics of each electronic device for
30 performing part of a business transaction and processing means for processing data transmissions received from one or more of said plurality of electronic devices and associating them with

-24-

one or more of others of said plurality of electronic devices by reference to the information in the database to complete the business transaction between the trading partners.

10. A system according to Claim 9, wherein the database of
5 information includes information relating to identity of the trading partners, the format in which documents are to be sent and received, data transmission protocols for the trading partners electronic devices, authentication data, and encryption data.

10

11. Software for transacting business between trading partners, including:

a data transmission module operable for transmitting data to and from a business transaction centre to and from a plurality
15 of remote electronic devices according to a data transmission protocol;

an identity module operable for identifying the remote electronic devices communicating with the business transaction centre;

20 a characterising module operatively associated with said identity module and operable to characterise the plurality of remote electronic devices according to their characteristics for performing part of a business transaction; and

a processing module operatively associated with said
25 characterising module and operable to process data transmissions from each of the plurality of remote electronic devices to others of the plurality of remote electronic devices according to the identity and characteristics of the electronic devices to complete a business transaction.

30

-25-

12. A method of transacting business including:

running a program on one or more computers so as to integrate software processes, the processes including:

transmitting data to a business transaction centre from a plurality of remote electronic devices according to one or more
5 data transmission protocols;

providing a database of information relating to a plurality of trading partners having one or more of the electronic devices;

identifying an electronic device from which data is being received ("the calling device") by reference to the information
10 in the database;

processing the data received from the calling device to identify an electronic device to which data is to be sent ("the answering device"), the answering device being operable to receive data in a predetermined answering device format;

15 converting the data transmitted from the calling device to the answering device format according to the characteristics of the identified answering device; and

transmitting the converted data to the answering device.

20 13. A method according to Claim 12, including sending the call document to a business transaction centre comprising one or more computers.

14. A method according to Claim 13, wherein the translation
25 of the document is carried out in the business transaction centre by reference to the information in the call document.

15. A method according to Claim 14, wherein the database of information includes information relating to identity of the
30 trading partners, the format in which documents are to be sent and received, data transmission protocols for the trading

-26-

partners electronic devices, authentication data, and encryption data.

16. A method according to Claim 15, wherein the information in the database is sufficient to enable reference of a plurality of different kinds of call documents relating to different kinds of business transactions.

17. A method of transacting business including:

connecting a plurality of electronic devices across a network to a business transaction centre, each electronic device having an electronic identity and a predetermined data transmission protocol for transmitting data and/or receiving data and a capability of performing part of a business transaction;

characterising each electronic device connected to the business transaction centre according to its electronic identity and its data transmission protocol;

sending a data transmission from one electronic device ("the calling device") to the business transaction centre via a channel allocated to the data transmission protocol of the calling device by reference to the characteristics of that calling device;

sending the data transmission from the business transaction centre to another electronic device ("the answering device") via another channel allocated to the data transmission protocol of the answering device by reference to the characteristics of that answering device.

18. A method according to Claim 16, including providing trading channels operable to facilitate communications according to each data transmission protocol as software modules within or forming part of the business transaction centre.

-27-

19. A method of transacting business, including:

connecting a plurality of electronic devices across a network, each electronic device having a data transmission protocol;

allocating trading channels to the electronic devices
5 according to their respective data transmission protocols;

providing a database of information relating to the data transmission protocol of each electronic device;

processing data transmissions received from one of the plurality of electronic devices for redirection to one or more
10 others of the plurality of electronic devices via the trading channels to which they are connected by reference to the information in the database relating to the data transmission protocols of the other electronic devices.

15 20. A method according to Claim 17, including a plurality of channels, referred to hereinafter as trading channels, operatively interposed between a communications network and a process engine, each trading channel being arranged to provide for communications with one call document format which may be
20 generated by one or more electronic devices.

21. A method according to Claim 18, wherein the trading channels are further arranged to provide communications with related call document formats.

25

22. A method according to Claim 19, including running a program on one or more computers so as to integrate software processes including:

remote administration for administering communications
30 between a business transaction centre and a plurality of electronic devices operatively connected thereto;

-28-

security for limiting unauthorised access to the business transaction centre;

receiving call documents from some of the electronic devices, each call document having a call document format;

translating call document formats to an intermediate format
5 and translated documents from the intermediate format to answering document formats;

managing the transmission of answering documents to answering electronic devices;

managing business processes according to the type of
10 business transaction being facilitated;

warehousing documents;

software process integrity, administration and exception handling; and

reporting activity in respect of any one or more of the
15 aforementioned software processes.

23. Software operable on one or more computers adapted to integrate the software processes substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Fig. 1.

20

24. A method of transacting business substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Fig. 1.

25. A system for transacting business substantially as
25 hereinbefore described with reference to Fig. 1.